

Conservation Officer comments for: 23/00570/REM

Proposal: Approval of Reserve Matters (Access, Appearance, Landscaping, Layout, and Scale) for outline planning permission 21/00269/OUT (Erection of one dwelling)

Site: 56 Hollycroft, Hinckley

Date Submitted: 16/08/2023

This proposal is located within the northern corner of the Hollycroft Conservation Area and is for a single dwelling situated in the rear garden to no.56 Hollycroft. No.56 Hollycroft is a mid-20th century detached dwelling typical of residential properties that surround Hollycroft Park. It is situated towards the front of a relatively large plot with land to the rear within which the application dwelling is proposed. The purpose of the conservation area is to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of inter-war Hollycroft Park and its surrounding properties and streets, with its key characteristics being identified in the Hollycroft Conservation Area Appraisal (2011).

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraphs 199-202 of the NPPF require great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets when considering the impact of a proposed development on its significance, for any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset to have clear and convincing justification, and for that harm to be weighed against the public benefits of a proposal.

Policies DM11 and DM12 of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (SADMP) DPD seek to protect and enhance the historic environment. Development proposals should ensure the significance of a conservation area is preserved and enhanced.

The vast majority of domestic plots along Hollycroft and within the wider conservation area serve single dwellings only. Although some plots are quite considerable in size very few have been subdivided for additional development and there are no examples of development to the rear of a plot within the conservation area. The proposal would constitute backland development which would be at odds with the urban grain of the conservation area due to the uncharacteristic layout and siting of the dwelling. In addition to the impact upon the conservation area further DM10 (Development and Design) specific considerations may also be to assess the impact that the siting of the development may have on the amenities of the existing and future occupiers at no.56 by virtue of the provision of an access drive to the side of the dwelling and also what appears to be a very small amenity space to serve the proposed dwelling as a result of its siting.

The proposed dwelling is a two-bedroom bungalow with a rectangular plan form, dual pitched roof, and projecting front gable. It has simple fenestration with windows and doors set under soldier brick courses. Architectural detailing is limited but includes a chimney feature on the western end of the front elevation. Details of the construction materials for the dwelling are to be confirmed but will most likely consist of a facing brick and roof tile.

The single storey scale of the dwelling limits the potential for adverse impacts upon the wider area and a single storey height for the dwelling does respect the characteristics of other similarly scaled dwellings within the vicinity of the site including within the conservation area boundary. The dwelling has a simple design resulting in an appearance that is characteristic

of other bungalows within the vicinity of the application site. Whilst the potential for architectural detailing is limited by the small-scale nature of the dwelling the use of the chimney upon the western end of the front elevation, with this section of the dwelling likely being the most visible from the conservation area street scene, adds some interest to its appearance. There is the potential for good quality construction materials to be selected which would follow the local vernacular, such as a textured red brick and natural clay tile, and it is suggested that a standard construction materials condition is used if the application is approved. The amended site plans confirms that the existing holly hedge to the wider site frontage (within the blue line) which contributes to the character of the conservation area street scene is to be retained, and a low-level hedge is proposed to divide the existing dwelling plot from the driveway to the proposed dwelling, which would soften the immediate visual impact resulting from the proposed site access at the site frontage.

Overall, it is considered that the scale, appearance (subject to confirmation of construction materials) and landscaping of the proposed dwelling would preserve the character and appearance of the Hollycroft Conservation Area. I make no comments on the proposed access. However, due to the uncharacteristic siting and layout of the proposed dwelling not following the traditional urban grain of the conservation area it would have an adverse impact upon its character. There is no clear and obvious means to avoid this harmful impact, but the level of impact is perhaps reduced by the position of the dwelling set back within the plot and being largely contained visually away from the conservation area street scene. The level of harm would be 'less than substantial' in terms of the NPPF and given the above in my opinion be towards the lower end of the spectrum of this category of harm.

Public benefits may follow from many developments and could be anything that delivers economic, social or environmental progress as described in the NPPF (paragraph 8). Public benefits may include heritage benefits as specified in the Planning Practice Guidance (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment – paragraph 20), such as:

- Sustaining or enhancing the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution of its setting
- Reducing or removing risks to a heritage asset
- Securing the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation

The proposal can demonstrate no heritage benefits. It is likely that non-heritage public benefits would arise from the proposal, such as one dwelling towards the borough's housing supply and some short-term employment from its construction etc. The level of public benefits identified shall need to be weighed against the harm caused in the balancing exercise required by Policy DM11 of the SADMP and para 202 of NPPF, noting that great weight should be given to the preservation of a designated heritage asset (para 199 of NPPF) to reflect the statutory requirement of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in that balancing exercise.

Ultimately the balancing exercise is a matter for the decision taker, and if the exercise comes out in favour of the proposal then it complies with Policies DM11 and DM12 of the SADMP DPD, section 16 of the NPPF and failing to reflect the statutory requirement of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.